

Stories

Abdulhalim Durma

Author's Biography

Born in Manisa in 1951. He completed his primary, secondary, and high school education in the same city. In 1976, he graduated from the Department of Psychology at the Faculty of Literature, Istanbul University. He performed his military service in Erzurum in 1979-80. Later, he worked as a teacher in Erzurum, Karabük, Afyon-Sandıklı, Manisa-Gördes, and Amasya-Suluova. He retired in 2005. Due to an illness he experienced in 2022, he began to focus his writing efforts on the field of stories.

Bogeyman Stories

There were six or seven of us sitting in our usual seats in the corner of the coffee shop, waiting for him to broach the subject. Our old friend was silent for a while. Then a nostalgic smile appeared on his face, as if a dream from the past had come alive before his eyes.

"You must have heard of it, he began. There is a saying, "He who has no sheikh, has the devil as his sheikh." This is perhaps the most appropriate thing to say about the deceased whose funeral we are attending today. But don't let this mislead you. This word can only be used to explain that he was not like everyone else. Not because he was a good or bad person.

- Well, his story is worth listening to, said one of us. Another showed that he didn't care, as if to object. "What could we possibly not know about him? He stays out of trouble, doesn't get involved in anything, has no quarrels with anyone, is a quiet person... isn't he. . ."

"You are right," our old friend confirmed what was said. "Until recently, what I would have said would have been similar opinions. An acquaintance who was living the last period of his life, quietly, with modest pleasures such as growing flowers in his garden, occasionally riding his bike and strolling along the canal. One day, after one such canal tour, he stopped by the lodging of the department where I worked and joined us in enjoying the samovar we were brewing under the pergola in the garden. It was as if he was in another world and experiencing the joy of spring to the bone. Along the way, his eyes had seen nothing but the beauty of colorful wild flowers. It was as though he was mesmerized. "You are the only ones who see this,"

said the servant pouring the tea into cups, as it were waking him from his reverie. For the people here, the wild flowers along the canal are nothing but weeds and thorns." I am sure he knew this too. He just wanted to share with us how he sees life.

The first objector was insistent on his opinions. "Doesn't this show us how distant he is from people? He has withdrawn into his own world, reduced his contact with people to a minimum, and condemned himself to a solitary life. When asking for forgiveness before the funeral prayer, the thought that came to mind was: Who could possibly owe him anything or owe him anything? . .

Our old friend said, "If there is no difference between condemning oneself and making a choice, can we say that this was one's choice?" The other one shrugged his shoulders to show that he didn't care, but he didn't respond. The subject didn't change. Our old friend continued. I met his younger brother who came to visit him during his last days in the hospital. He was one of those rare people who didn't wait years to become close to his brother. We got along quickly. I stopped by the hotel where he was staying. We talked for a long time. You couldn't meet him because he left before the funeral.

I asked curiously, "What did he tell you?"

The little brother in the hotel lobby delved into the depths of his memory with a nostalgic start.

"My mother suffered a lot with his toilet training," he began. He gave her a hard time that she hadn't had with her previous two children. Every morning, he would find the bed wet. The unfortunate woman later admitted that it was because of her own bogey stories that the little boy could not go to the toilet in the house at night. Stories with bogeymen...

"There was a house in the neighborhood with no one living in it. Even though he would pass a little bit outside during the day, at night he would pass farther away from that house, as if brushing against the opposite wall. The bogeymen were almost identical with darkness. Even the inside of their own house became a place for the bogeymen. At night, he would want someone to accompany him to the kitchen or other room five meters away from the room they were sitting in.

"- Naturally, we, as his siblings, did not want to sleep in the same bed with him. Darkness, loneliness and fear. . . I do not remember how and when this psychological problem, which took root in his childhood and lasted for a long time, was resolved. Although late, he eventually learned to hold his urine.

"We were more like friends than brothers. I never called him brother. He never insisted on me calling him brother even though I called him by his first name. When we were kids, we climbed to the top of the mountain on which the city was built with my friends. Later, he started climbing again every year. One summer when he came on vacation, he offered me a climb to the top. Although I accepted his request and joined him, after a while, I decided to turn back because the weather was unbearably hot. The climb to the top, which took about six hours, was unbearable in that heat. He was determined, he continued climbing, and I returned home while the road was still open. He did not come that night. Nor the next day. . . But he returned more than a day later, towards evening, exhausted from fatigue. He ate a few mouthfuls and went to sleep. When he woke up, I sat down in front of him and asked him to tell me.

"After I left you, I continued climbing for a long time. The lack of a trail or a goat path made climbing

difficult. Finally, I came to a place where it was impossible to go any further. I was going to turn around and try to find another way. But I had lost the path I had come from in the bushes that surrounded me. I was glad to find a small, dry stream bed with not a drop of water in it. This path would take me straight to the valley. After a difficult descent through the thick vegetation, where no sky was visible, I finally saw an open area a short distance below. In order to get there, I leaned down from the narrow place I was in and let myself go into the void. This place resembled an eagle's nest. The front was a steep cliff. The right side connected to this cliff and was a dead end. The back side was impossible to return to where I came from. Only the left side was dangerous enough to pass. I sat down, stretched my legs, leaned my back against the rock and fixed my eyes on the city below. This place was first an eagle's nest, then it gradually turned into an ivory tower. I was in a difficult situation to get out of. It got dark, the lights came on in the city. Naturally, I didn't sleep a wink until morning. There was a very steep area of about three meters, which was thought-provoking. If I could pass this part covered with small stones without sliding towards the cliff with the stones, I could overcome the following parts with less anxiety. I started to cross the rocky area, almost sticking to the ground face down. I think I went through at least half an hour of testing with cold sweat running down my back, along with the next seven or eight meters of dangerous territory. I realized that the price of the ivory tower was very high.

He was passionate about summiting mountains. For this reason, he would travel to regions with the highest peaks in the country. Moreover, he would do it alone every time. I don't know if he had similar adventures, but later he added photography to this climbing sport. He would

climb castles in many cities he visited and take bird's eye and panoramic photographs. He would specifically record photographs of general and specific parts of cities. "He who does not climb to great heights cannot see far," he would say, but his aim was to gain depth as much as to broaden the horizon. "And of course, cycling. I don't think cycling trips were any less than mountain climbing in terms of his perspective on life. He went on cycling trips that lasted for days. I believe these trips played a role in his learning the history, geography and people of the country. He described the unforgettable difficulties he had experienced during such a long journey. He never stayed in a hotel, never went to a restaurant. In the trunk of his bicycle he had a pan, a small tent he had made from feed sacks, and repair materials. Dehydration and malnutrition had an immediate effect. On the first night of that long journey, while trying to sleep in a secluded place near the road, he was invaded by mosquitoes, one of the country's problems of a century ago. His resistance was broken and he decided to return. He packed up and set off.

"Midnight. Pitch-black darkness reminiscent of a cave. No way in sight. No one coming or going. With disappointment, as daybreak finally dawned, I climbed the back wall of the two-thousand-year-old theater that still stands a short distance away and went inside. I walked from the audience area to the stage. I tried to imagine what it looked like from each point. The audience, the actors, and even someone from outside watching the play and the audience as a whole. When I left the theatre, the sun had not yet risen. I cycled for a while along the path between the fields. The ruins of the aqueducts were visible. I could not go back because of the mosquitoes. I had to keep going.

The younger brother, whose mind I sensed was fixated on a memory in the dim light of the hotel lobby, remained silent for a while. Then he almost returned to the beginning of his story and said, "There is something else that is really effective." An accident . . .

I was curious. "An accident!?!..

A bitter smile appeared on his face.

"A life experience that will leave deep scars. Another danger that will replace the bogeymen!.. But first, I must talk about another subject where all of them are experienced together. Although we were not in need, my father had the idea of making us work outside, which he saw as part of our education in preparation for life. He was the one of the siblings who did the most peddling of any kind imaginable from the age of 12. From selling soda and sunflower seeds in summer cinemas to selling newspapers in the city, from selling eggs in neighborhood markets to selling insect repellent, and from selling plastic children's toys during holidays, there is no sector he has not entered. He would start the day when my father woke him up to sell morning bagels in the middle of the night when it was not yet dawn. With a tin can with a lid under his arm in which he placed the bagels, he would walk the streets, saying, "Hot ... hot! Fresh bagels . . ." he would shout. One of the memories we have in common that we enjoy recalling is that every time he came home for lunch on hot summer days, we would spread out the newspapers and magazines he sold on the living room floor and get lost in each one. So much so that he sometimes surprised me by earning more than my father. Much later, his business life, in which he accepted defeat with humor, ended in a nationwide economic crisis. "For the sake of the country's interests, I am renouncing the business of making money, so as not to do more harm to the country."

I think this commercial life provided free environments where he experienced taking initiative, until he deeply felt the helplessness of being tied to his hands.

There was a richness of humor in the younger brother's style of speaking, in which sincerity was clearly evident. "He was somewhere between studying and not studying. He was failing every class, prolonging his education. He made good use of the opportunities that the system gave to such students to spend a year of their lives outside of school, so that they could come to their senses. In order to learn well, he studied in the same classes twice. He was among the most senior students in the school. He was not a successful student in appearance. Despite the age difference between us, we were both in the same class in the senior year. Strangely enough, unlike many seemingly successful students at school, when we graduated we both got into the schools we wanted for higher education. I think his teachers were surprised by the unexpected success of the 'double-stitched' student. However, at that time he was in the midst of an incurable disease that he had been suffering from for a long time.

"The beginning of this story began five years ago when he experienced what was destined to happen, in other words, when he had an accident. This was an event he had never encountered before in his street life. Naturally, it was not among his experiences. It did not appeal to his mind. It was irrational. He realized that he was caught helplessly, tightly. He could not move, he froze. All his willpower had disappeared. He knew one thing. That was that those who caught this disease never recovered.

"After spending a year outside, he entered the school from which they had kicked him out the door, through the window. A new class, new faces, new friends.

He didn't understand anything at first. In a short time, one of the faces in the class somehow got into his head, never to leave. Then, in a way he couldn't understand, he started seeing her everywhere. He was always thinking about her. Everywhere, all the time. He couldn't talk to her, couldn't make eye contact. That never happened. Even though they had been in the same class for a few years, breathing the same air, he couldn't get close to her. Outside, when they met, he would stop what he was doing, watch her from a distance and follow her home each time. There was no future in his dreams. In fact, there was no dream of a future for him. An obsession! . . . No.. . that word would be inadequate to describe what he experienced. To tell the truth, he didn't get stuck at one point. He couldn't get her out of his mind. But when he tried to give a name to what he was experiencing, he thought the closest name was the word 'love'. A one-way, divine love that didn't expect anything in return. And he was thankful for the strong feelings he felt. The girl's beauty had awakened those indescribable feelings in him.

The younger brother was silent for a while. I couldn't guess how the story would continue. Could it be that the reason for settling so far from home was a broken heart? I don't know. But I underestimated the subject of a broken heart.

“He took her with him when he went from the countryside to the big city for higher education.”

Would you believe it if I said that I swallowed my little tongue in surprise when I heard these words.

“He was with her all the time. And this continued for years.”

I almost stuttered. “What do you mean! . . .”

His answer was short, definite and convincing. “Like a mental patient.

This time the silence lasted a bit longer.

"A completely secretive person. There was a complete contrast between the calmness that dominated his external appearance and the storms he experienced in his inner world. Perhaps a state of surrender could be explanatory in describing him. He was content with his fate, with what happened to him, and he was thankful for it. I guess I am repeating this. A state of surrender and gratitude.

"Is his story over? . . . "No," answered the younger brother to his own question. As long as he draws breath, it will continue. But now it is time for another subject. . . .

"He thought that cities were like people. Settlements that were born like a living being, grew, matured, developed a personality... and then lost their vitality for various reasons. While he was in the formation phase of this idea, the traces of which he tried to see in the photographs he took, he was assigned to a remote part of the countryside. It was, in fact, an exceptional place for escape. It was far from the big cities and was seen as a place of deprivation, a place of exile for many who had expectations from life. But for him it was like an ivory tower, an opportunity to consolidate his thoughts. A settlement with a history dating back to ancient times, with its ancestors' wood-based cultural heritage in the middle of a vast forest sea with the rich vegetation of the north. Such a peaceful harmony of nature and culture was an experience he had never experienced before. The houses where the people had displayed the richness of their inner worlds for centuries, the workplaces in the bazaars, coffee houses, inns, baths, places of worship, all reflected their lifestyles. There were traces of an aesthetic concern in these structures that did not only serve practical purposes. Wherever he looked, he saw a painting by a master

painter. The realities he experienced resembled a rich fantasy world. It was as if he was inside that painting and living in an incredible dream. Until all of this turned into a nightmare.

I was holding my breath. What could happen! ? . .

“When he was inevitably introduced to the district governor, he did not expect to have a person he could talk to. However, this experienced administrator soon became someone he would visit regularly. He would often send him messages and wait for him to drink tea by the small pool in the garden of the district governor’s office after work. This middle-aged man had no ambition to rise higher in the bureaucratic ranks. At the very beginning of his career, he was at the pinnacle of his reach. He had accepted this position and was trying to fulfill his duty perfectly. His potential to become a governor was, as if it were a universal rule, dictated by circumstances beyond his personal capabilities. But this could not be a reason to neglect what was expected of him. The statesman's speeches were not unfamiliar to him. They would share their thoughts without getting into arguments about fate and will. He was a complete 'problem solver' when it came to solving the problems faced by the people. He asked him about his own vital problem. "Have you ever encountered an unsolvable problem?.." The district governor responded seriously. “We cannot remain spectators to events. The state is the will.” He appreciated him. The bookish equivalent of Mülkiye showed that he had internalized the spirit of being a statesman. No, said the district governor. “I hope we will not encounter such situations. The unsolvable problem is the state of harm experienced by the state and the citizens.” He particularly pondered this answer. But finally he muttered, "Take your medicine away, doctor."

“The heat of summer was behind us, and the coolness of autumn had already begun to make itself felt in the district. The nature, which was rapidly losing its vibrant colors, was turning into dark, dull colors that reminded of extinction, giving an unpleasant pessimism to the human soul. The property manager, who had just arrived in the district on assignment, had no difficulty in finding a house to rent and immediately brought his family there. No one could have known that the dry and cold wind that came from the north that day and immediately intensified and turned into a storm was a sign of disaster. In the evening, when the wife of the property manager was bringing in the barbecue she had lit in the garden, she thought she heard a knock on the street door and went to open it. The door was thrown wide open by the storm and the barbecue in the center of the wooden living room was suddenly knocked over by the violent air flow. Without realizing what had happened, the embers of coals spread around and ignited the dry wooden floor. The woman was horrified by the suddenly growing flames.

“When the men left the evening prayers, the fire, whose flames could be seen in the distance, had not yet spread to other houses. When the district fire brigade arrived with its inadequate equipment, there were women and children gathered around. With strong foresight, the district governor was on the phone trying to reach the governor. The effect of the gale was strong and the fire could not be prevented from spreading to other houses. Not knowing what to do, the adults rushed left and right, only to realize that all their efforts were in vain. It was clear that they were faced with an unpreventable situation. Although it was said that help was coming from the governor and nearby settlements, the uncontrollable fire continued to spread. Crop payments to farmers were in the

vaults of the only bank branch in the district and the bank building was now among the burning buildings. In addition, official buildings such as the government house, courthouse, gendarmerie, post office, military service branch and prison were completely destroyed. Our dreams often exceed reality, but this time reality was beyond dreams. The fire and the wind had become the trigger for an irresistible disaster. All the people gathered in groups could do was cry and whine, expressing helplessness. Not only were their properties turning to ashes before their eyes, but the wealth they had inherited from their ancestors was also disappearing one by one. The bazaars, inns, baths, mosques, and workplaces that made up their entire world, just like their homes, were completely surrendered to the flames. The first to arrive from outside the district were the governor and his fire truck. The people were hopeless. There was a great danger that the fire would spread to the forest adjacent to the district. The fire chief took precautions to prevent the spread of the disaster, which had spread over a wide area and was clearly unstoppable no matter where one started. At daybreak, with the wind ceasing, the fire was seen to be dying down and people were beginning to leave the town in a panic. Most of the people, who had spent the night in the cold and sleepless, including children, were leaving the town with their relatives who came to pick them up from nearby villages in horse-drawn carriages. Two thirds of the settlement had been destroyed. The faces of all the officials were tired and sullen. The smell of burning was pervasive. Every now and then a glimmer of flame attempted to revive among the still smoking piles of ashes, but was immediately drowned by water. Did all this indicate a curse, a jinx, no . . . in his submission he would not accept this, he could only say it was the manifestation

of fate. "It was the biggest fire the country had ever seen in its history. Undoubtedly, people would build a new life, but this life would be completely distant from the identity of the city, which they would keep alive as long as they lived with strong nostalgia for the memories that were deeply rooted in their minds. A grim tableau of devastation unfolded, a haunting echo of times past when fleeing enemies would set the world ablaze. The fiery ballet with the wind was a macabre dance with death, forever etched in their memories.

"He couldn't remember whether the journalists or the higher state officials came first. Maybe both at the same time. The deputy prime minister made morale-boosting speeches, constantly emphasizing that the state was on the side of its citizens in the face of this painful disaster. He did not know whether he was facing only one tenth of the city or whether the disaster victims who had returned from nearby villages to meet him were also there. The statesman compared the small number of casualties with the disasters the country had faced at other times and expressed gratitude for them. But he did not dwell on it much, considering the suffering of his relatives. The aid was not only domestic but also international. There were discussions in the parliament about what the government could do in those days. Laws were proposed. In a short time, mass housing was built. At first these were said to be gratuitous, but later the payments were tied to installments. Unaccounted expenditures were probably among the items that disrupted the normal service plans of governments and upset budget balances. He never saw the governor and the district governor again in his life. He had only heard that they had disappeared behind the mountain of documents piled up in front of him at one of the many tables in a dimly lit hall of a huge government office in the

capital. He could not understand how the bureaucracy had condemned these people, who had no part in the disaster, to oblivion.

The younger brother fell silent. There was no one left in the hotel lobby except us. Before saying goodbye, I said, "I didn't know any of this."

He said thoughtfully, "I certainly don't know things either." We hugged like old friends. He went out the door to say goodbye.

Our old friend had finished his words. The people around the table quietly dispersed one by one and disappeared into the darkness of the night. Finally, we got up.

Before leaving, he said, "Can you hear it?" I listened intently. Then, curiously, I asked, "What?" He smiled. "The silence!"

Suluova, 30. 08. 2024

Fading Photographs

That day, after watching videos of traffic accidents shared on social media for a while, he called his siblings over the phone about the idea that had previously occupied his mind. His older sister and younger brother had accepted the idea of coming together, at least for the last time, to visit their older brother in this mortal world, without any excuse. They agreed on a place and date to meet. They informed their brothers about their visit in advance so as not to encounter any surprises. After these meetings were completed, he leaned back in his chair and took a deep breath as if he had accomplished a great task. This will be a farewell dinner for wise people rather than a council of elders, he thought. Then he let himself go into the flow of his memories, which had a strong nostalgic effect on him.

His earliest memories include a camel caravan leaving the city and dirtying the ground opposite the shop at the crossroads, and his father cleaning it with a broom and shovel. The camels, which had been used for centuries in transportation, disappeared from life in those years, never to be seen again, except for festivals. That dirt road was later paved with rough stones, much later asphalted and years later converted into concrete. Since his childhood, the city had been slowly rising towards the sky as if imperceptibly, with the municipalities always building the new on top of the old without digging foundations in their pavement and road works. While chasing traces of the old world in cities with prominent historical value, he had noticed this kind of practical transformation, which he had seen in many parts of the

country, during his last visit to the city. The restored historical values were located below the streets or avenues where daily life continued, and in some places, these places were visited by going down the stairs.

Their house, built in the early fifties, was the highest in the neighborhood, which consisted of single-story houses, mostly with gardens. The terrace of this two-story house, occupying the corner, overlooked a large part of the city. Among his unforgettable memories were watching the entire plain, the mountain rising in front of them, and the countless stars in the sky while lying on the rug he and his brothers had spread on the ground in the city where light pollution was not effective due to the scarcity of nights in those years. On the plain, they would always immediately spot the 'black train' coming from far away, and in the rainy season they would watch in amazement as the river that gave life to the land overflowed, creating huge puddles of water. In these cases, many villages, large and small, were often stranded.

Although the historical face of the city, which was completely destroyed by the great fire disaster at the end of the War of Independence, began to change towards an ordinary, identity-less appearance as seen in other parts of the country, it was accepted that the real transformation occurred with the modernization in the middle of the century. In his childhood, life was still characterized by the old world. He knew this best from his life in the grocery store. It was always interesting to him to see a tanker truck pull up to the shop and fill a barrel of kerosene with its hose, which was raised half a meter off the ground right next to the entrance. He was careful not to get his hands in the liquid as much as possible when he sold measuring cups of kerosene to customers who came with a bottle. They would also keep bottles of rubbing

alcohol and gas needles for the pressure stove used in homes. Another use for kerosene was in lamps. For this reason, the wick, the mechanical part and the lamp glass required for lamps were sold. The sale of oil was the same way. Olive oil and sunflower oil were poured into the customer's container with the help of measuring cups and a funnel. Cologne was also sold with the help of a narrow and long glass measuring cup. This time, rubbing his hands, especially with cologne, had become part of his job. Vita, the yellow colored oil, was sold by scooping it out of a 20-kilogram can, placing a small amount on a piece of greaseproof paper and weighing it on a scale. The white colored Sana, on the other hand, was more easily marketed as it came packaged in wooden boxes. Some argued that the company that produced these oils, which the government had set up in partnership with a foreign firm, was an example in the country's economic history. Foodstuffs such as cheese, olives and halva, which were widely consumed, were weighed on the scales and offered for sale. The agricultural workers who went to work in the fields in the early hours of the morning would often take a loaf of bread and 100 g of olives and halva with them for lunch while they worked all day under the sun. Of course, life was not easy for some in every period.

In a black and white photograph, Selim Efendi, posing in front of his as-yet-finished house, was apparently one of the most flamboyant, if not the richest, man in the neighborhood. This should not be deceiving, because he was certainly a 'moral monument' who did not allow ostentation. When the old man imagined his father, he thought that this was the most accurate description of him. This man of medium height, thin and always serious appearance, was someone who had fulfilled to the letter what society expected of him in life. Moreover, if we

consider that the starting point was full of misfortunes, it could be considered quite successful. The fact that an orphaned child came to the country with a wave of migration from the Balkans at the beginning of the 20th century and held on to life required being fair in passing judgment on him. Yet he was not entirely unfortunate. The fact that he was taken in and adopted and then educated in a boarding school worked in his favor in his struggle for life. Even better, he was given land to cultivate in line with the farmer's land law passed by the government. He seized these opportunities and became a good citizen, a family man and a respected figure in his community.

Selim Efendi had an infallible sense of righteousness that could be called strict. He had a strong sense of conscience and a religious understanding that, as having spiritual direction, did not allow any kind of controversy. And this religious feeling became the dominant motivation of his life. After two unsuccessful marriages due to reasons such as his wives not being able to give him children, his luck turned around and with the encouragement of his last wife, he married a girl twenty years younger than him and eventually had five children, one of whom died in infancy. A few years later, in order to send his children to school, he sold his house and land in the village and moved to the city, 40 km away.

Selim Efendi's literacy made him a distinguished figure in his neighborhood. He bought newspapers, had more than a shelf of religious books in his house, read the Koran constantly and taught all his children religious knowledge himself. The old man always lamented that he was not literate enough to read his father's diaries, which he had inherited, written in the old language using the Arabic alphabet, because of the language revolution that led to the adoption of the Latin alphabet.

As he visualized his father, he wondered: How much did his mindset, where social rules were the weight, allow the expression of his suppressed individual sides? Still, I must not be unfair to him. Even though it was weak, a malevolent side of him that did not care about what others had to say was also making itself felt. Behind his social success lay a self-control mechanism built on anxieties and, more importantly, fears. This mechanism dominated his behavior so strongly that it prevented him from expressing his natural human emotions to his wife and children. But his diaries were an exception, and it was perhaps only in these pages that he was able to escape from the pressure and loneliness he felt deeply. However, the fact that he asked his wife's permission to grow a beard, consulted her every once in a while, and allowed her to take him out with her friends showed that the outwardly rigid monotony of their marriage was not true. It could certainly be thought that the modern lifestyle of the 'sweetheart' who had mediated in his marriage had an effect on this. However, his liberal attitude was remarkable in his conservative environment. In addition, he must have been pleased that his wife earned a little money from tailoring.

Selim Efendi's spiritual structure, although completely filled with the religious duties that regulated his life, had the crushing weight of loneliness. This feeling had such a negative effect that it reminded people of their limitations and their helplessness in the face of problems they were helpless in solving.

His father had experienced this feeling most clearly when he could not find guarantors for his eldest son to get a loan for his higher education. None of the merchants from whom he constantly bought goods for his shop would vouch for him. But he would feel this helplessness

even more acutely in his experience with his eldest son, whom he had once given up for adoption shortly before his death. The household refrigerator in which the small shop kept its foodstuffs had been bought by his eldest son, who had become a wage earner. And the son came one day, emptied the fridge and took it away. Then, naturally, the yogurt turned sour and the cheese spoiled because of the heat.

The old man thought it would be fair to give him a share in this part of his memories. In the city, one of the ways people had fun on holiday nights was to set off fireworks and explosives that made noise. These materials were sold everywhere, and that year the governor's office had specifically banned the sale of one of them. The old man, who was a student at the time, was caught red-handed while selling the prohibited product on the stall he had set up in front of the shop, when the police used a common criminal. He remembered the common criminal from the theft he had committed from his shops a while ago. There was something disturbing and wrong about the police's use of a method of catching a criminal by using another criminal. In the end, his father, the shop owner, was held accountable for this. He was called to the police station and his statement was taken. He never forgot that moment in his life when he saw his father sitting on a wooden chair and giving his statement to the officer in front of him. After that incident, whenever the old man spoke to a police officer, he worried that he would be found guilty. He had caused his father to suffer the punishment for his own mistake. Selim Efendi, who had always obeyed the law to the letter throughout his life with his strong sense of conscience, was found guilty of an act in which he had no involvement, as if it were a simple example of the injustice of the world. He was mentally

exhausted and eventually retired, quitting his job. He rented the shop and its contents to someone he knew well in the neighborhood. Just one month later, when two guards came to the house to serve the fine on him, they learned that he had passed away a short time ago.

The traditional understanding of religion, which eliminated the individual side of man for the sake of the interests of the social order, had no consolation to offer to Selim Efendi for the exhausting feeling of loneliness. In this regard, he probably preferred to follow the Sufi path, which was aimed at individual maturity, but which Sunni jurisprudence, aimed at the masses, discredited and humiliated. Undoubtedly, his personality, which was heavily weighted by his personal experiences, played a major role in this. The old man would later generalize this loneliness that characterized his father to his family members, his immediate circle, and then to society as a whole. "We are alone... and we don't realize it."

The mother's youthful dreams probably did not include her joining her life with a man of her father's age who had been married twice before. In any case, her childhood years of disappointments and hardships must not have allowed her to have rosy dreams about marriage. The hardships his father had caused the family as a deserter did not disappear or diminish when he was finally reunited with the family after overcoming the fear of being caught.

In his black and white photographs, he had none of the vitality of a young girl. In his eyes there was an anxious expression in anticipation of some unknown bad event that would overwhelm him with its overwhelming effect. And then . . . The old man thought that he had inherited from his mother the tendency to see in every event a structure that would end in sadness.

His mother had come to this world to suffer. When she went from the city to the village as a bride, one of the stories she was told was about a bad incident that had happened to a young bride like her in the past. It was about a young bride who went to the toilet outside their house, fell into the pit of the toilet and much later they found her body in the pit. This story, true or not, surely represented her fate.

While living the historical destiny of the female gender, there were also initiatives in which the mother participated in life. In her later years, she dreamed of new dreams and realized them with her very limited means. Together with a close friend whom she dragged by the arm, she walked through the doors of the Girls' Vocational High School, completed tailoring courses and became famous as the neighborhood tailor. With a broken-down sewing machine, a few spools of thread and a pair of scissors, she began sewing clothes for everyone, and thus her hand found money, which gave her a little more freedom. The old man thought that he had never seen this initiative so clearly in his father, who educated four children and was in direct contact with society.

He thought that one of the qualities he admired about his father was his motivation behind trying to make his mark with his photographs. The way he posed for the camera with his children in front of his shop was a meaningful challenge that seemed almost contrary to his life of humility. This photograph was proof that he was doing exactly what his culture demanded of him, that he was perfectly in tune with the values of the society in which he lived. He was sitting on a soda crate and behind his shoulders were his older son and daughter, his younger brother on his knee and the old man himself on the other

side. This special photograph, in which the mother was not included, was a summary of Selim's life.

The eldest brother resembled the 'rebellious youth' in the hit movie of those years, 'West Side Story', with his coat in the fashion of the time, his hair combed backwards and his arms held at his sides above his waist. The rebellious side that defined his identity had obviously allowed a fixed conviction to come to life, a deathly and murderous thought that would last for the rest of his life. The son of an authoritarian father would obey until he was in power. Rebellion, of course, had to wait until it could stand on its own two feet.

It was at this point that the old man saw the influence of their father on him and his brother. A cautious side that did not respond immediately, that concealed itself. The influence of events pushed into the subconscious would persist to the end, unless they were dealt with through subtle psychological analysis. The old man admitted his disappointment, judging that the elder brother never had time for such analysis. His older brother was always right and their parents could never be forgiven. The older brother's trauma was simply related to being given up for adoption. If the parents gave up their son, naturally, the son should have had the right to give them up.

In several of the nostalgic photographs in the family album, the "auntie" and her husband were the oldest members of the relatives and had a role in the formation of the family. One of these photographs was taken in a garden on the occasion of an uncle's marriage. However, the focus was on the great-uncle and his wife "auntie", with the bride and groom slightly behind. The great-uncle was noticeable with his large build, and the small child standing between his legs was the old man's

sister." On his right and left were his wife and his wife's sister, next to the cozy grandmother was the grandmother with the old man's chubby baby in her arms, at the other end was the big brother with his soldier's stance, in the back row was the father, the bride and groom with a bouquet of flowers in their hands, and the groom's only sibling, the mother. Although each of them had different inner worlds, what was reflected in the photograph was total seriousness. While the other photographs bear the traces of the hat revolution, the effects of which were still lingering in those years, in this photograph taken in the garden, everyone's heads were uncovered. The grandfather, a draft dodger, and his brother-in-law, the civilian officer of the military recruitment office, looked at the lens with their hands on their knees, but their expressions were different. While the severe psychological impact on the public of the serious measures taken against draft evaders, which were a major problem for the rulers until about twenty-five years ago, was still having a severe psychological impact on the public, the grandfather's eyes showed a nervousness of timid waiting, fearing that he might be caught at any moment, while the other one showed the self-confidence of a man who was aware that he was the representative of the law. The big brother-in-law wore a comfortable short-sleeved shirt with suspenders, while the others could not hide their thin build even with their jackets. The moustaches of the father-in-law, grandfather and father were Hitler-like, reflecting the outdated fashion of those years.

The father-in-law, who reflected the sullen authoritarian civil servant type of the Republican era, and his wife, who reflected the Western type with her appearance, had an unquestionable dominance over this family of which they were the founders. Since they had no

children of their own, when they asked the eldest of their ten-year-old siblings to run errands for them because they were getting old, the parents had no chance to say 'no' to this order in line with the codes of a culture of obedience. But a new life in a new city, after a long hours of traveling on a truck with all the stuff piled on top of it, was unacceptable for the adopted child. Unable to cope with the endless and incomprehensible whining, the child's stubbornness soon convinced his new parents that what they were doing was wrong and he was able to return to the legless family. However, the parents had caused a lifelong trauma. The child's need for security, which he needed to overcome, was not met, and in a strange twist of events, this became an important factor in his success in life. Later in life, although he attributed his success in life only to his hard work, he would never admit that this trauma was the motivation behind his hard work. The equivalent of insecurity with his father would be a lack of love with his mother. This would manifest itself late in his life, to the point of his sadness at not finding the love he sought in his wife. He would always express the misfortune of being the first child on whom his parents learned how to raise a child with the words, "Instead of being the first in the family, I should have been a fox on the mountain".

In short, mother and father were unforgivable. Near the time of the mother's death, the only picture in her room was that of her first child. Although her daughter would occasionally say in conversation that the mother loved her brothers the most of all her children, the old man felt that it meant something more than love. Because of the trauma of childhood, his brothers had always made their mother feel that she and her father had abandoned her.

The old man imagined that his mother must have experienced a similar trauma. He knew that the trauma of a deserter father who had caused the family hardship throughout his life must have had a negative impact on the young girl's upbringing, as she held a grudge until her death and could not forgive her father. The resemblance between her mother and her brother was surprising as a twist of fate.

With some delay, they met at the agreed place. The younger brother attributed the quality of the roads to the fact that they were able to come together at such a convenient time, even though they had traveled from three different cities in a country at least five hundred kilometers apart. Then he concluded by saying that in recent years the country had made great strides in every field. Usually, he did not speak for long. Once started, endless conversations were the trademark of the older brothers they had come to visit. Without delay, they took a car and set off for the eldest brother's summer house in the village. When they arrived, they immediately started reminiscing about the old days with shows of joy, hugs and embraces. The conversation was lively, moving on to the next topic before it was over. Laughs and laughter every now and then. The years of coldness between sister and sister-in-law had disappeared, and the sweetness of the grandchildren was being talked about. Sister-in-law had spent hours preparing for the fifteen minute meal. They took a souvenir photo at the dining table. Taking advantage of the fact that the elder brother had left the hall for a moment, the sister-in-law asked the brothers and sister how they had found him. The old man frowned but could not express his opinion. The older sister and the younger brother could only say that they 'thought he

looked a bit old'. 'A bit old'. . . The sister-in-law didn't press the issue either.

While they were drinking their coffee in the living room, a photograph that the old man had taken during his visit ten years ago came to mind. This unfaded photograph was of an old couple holding hands walking on the beach. When looked at carefully, it was inevitable that this image would make one think. Seeing them like this after a lifetime of struggling to survive reminded the old man of the tendency he thought he had inherited from his mother, "to see a structure that will end in sadness in every event." But no . . . His father had never held hands with his mother like this. The part that added meaning to the story was that the old man in this photo had a life partner who supported him so that he could stand on his feet. And this life partner had acted like a mother who had tolerated his occasional childish whining throughout his life, but who had also frequently scolded him. The childish obedience of their older brother, which did not go unnoticed, caused a pleasant feeling in his brothers and sister. They saw that he felt safe in the hands of his wife. His brother, who was scattered when he was alone and came to life in an extraordinary way when he was with his wife, was as if he was liberated from the feeling of insecurity that continued throughout his life due to the trauma he experienced in his childhood with this surrender. The two good children and three grandchildren that he was proud of were the greatest joy of his old age. The pride of going to the Eid prayers with his sons was indescribable. He would get even more excited when he talked about his grandchildren, his eyes would sparkle. Even a simple gesture of those little children would become the most meaningful event of his life.

Although the guests had come a long way, they did not stay long as they had agreed beforehand. All the insistence of the aunt and brother were fruitless. They would set out on their way back the next day, with the promise of repeating this visit from time to time.

Suluova, 7. 09. 2024

Towards the Light

It was the last day of March, a day of treacherous beauty where the blinding sun clashed with the lingering chill against your nose, ears, and cheeks. Despite the winter's gentle caress, the arrival of spring felt like a cruel trick. I must admit, I was fooled by the beautiful weather that day. I took the bike out of the basement, dusted it off, and checked the tires. Then, without wasting any time, I went to the bike shop, bought a new inner tube and outer tire, and replaced them. I checked the brakes and oiled the chain. Next, I slipped into my ridiculous, plastic sauna suit and my holey socks, and plugged in my headphones. As I started pedaling to the music composed of samples from every country, I could also feel the slightly unpleasant breeze in the air. Without paying any attention to it, I indulged in romantic feelings, because at such times, unlike riding a motorcycle or driving a car, I felt like I was living life rather than just watching it. While I don't usually do this with others, bike rides often provide me with a chance to introspect, and I must admit, I frequently find myself feeling grateful. People often ask me, 'Why bike when you have a car?' But who pays any attention to that?

A quick 20-minute drive, 10 minutes each way, would be perfect. That day, for some reason, after cycling, I felt a slight weariness, like spring fatigue, a drowsiness, and a vague headache. I found myself imagining lying in the lush, rain-soaked grass of the tree-lined garden, as if it were inviting me to rest. That secluded spot beneath the pine tree was the perfect place to lie down. Without hesitation, I slowly settled onto the natural bed. How pleasant! I realized that I was beginning to feel a sense of tranquility in all my limbs, as if I was being enveloped in

comfort. It couldn't have been a laziness in brain functions, because my mind was working. Reflecting later, I admit that my state of mind at that moment aligned with the saying, 'Even at the moment of death, there are things to be learned. I'm not entirely sure, but perhaps I was experiencing a state of mind similar to the one described by a philosopher whose name I can't recall, who compared it to 'the awareness of the transition between wakefulness and sleep. As I said, I was watching and talking to myself. The branches of the black pine above me and the grass I was lying on swayed in the breeze. Life was flowing past me relentlessly, yet I was rooted in place, merely observing. I don't know how long it was, but finally I thought I had to get up. If I kept lying like this, I was bound to catch a cold and get sick. However, I immediately realized that I couldn't get up. It felt as if my muscles weren't receiving commands from my brain. If I can get up, I will have accomplished a great job. I repeated this several times. If I could get up... After a while, my will won this struggle and I slowly stood up. But I immediately realized that I had to watch my balance, I had to hold on to something. I could hardly get into the house and I went straight to bed. After a while, somehow, I remembered to check my phone. Without getting up, I picked up the phone on the bedside table and saw that my sister had called me a few hours ago. When I turned to her, even though she didn't understand what I was saying, she immediately grasped the change in me that I hadn't noticed. My nephew was shouting from the other side of the receiver, "Uncle!... Turn off the television! . . .Television!? .. It was already off.. Even if I objected, it was useless, she would send her son to get me. I don't remember how much time passed, but I realized that my nephew had arrived, calling out "Uncle!" along

with a light moving around the pitch-dark room. I asked him for support because I was having trouble keeping my balance. We got into his car waiting outside the door and set off. Only then did I realize the sound of the music player still playing in the pocket of my sauna sweatpants. The sound of him telling me to turn off the TV so he could understand what I was saying while on the phone was the sound coming from the music player. Only then did I realize the sound of the music player still playing in the pocket of my sauna tracksuit. The sound of him telling me to turn off the TV so he could understand what I was saying while on the phone was the sound coming from the music player. It crossed my mind that he would think, "Look at the music my uncle listens to." The half-hour car ride ended at the entrance to the hospital emergency room. I was seated in a wheelchair and registered. We were waiting for the doctor to come. First, I barely made it to the bathroom. After I had done some of it on myself, half relieved, my eyes fell on my reflection in the window. I don't know if it was the effect of the light, but I thought that the reflected image was not mine. At the place where I was taken for examination, the doctor and nurses surrounded me. How beautiful this woman is! . . . Oh my God! . . . Like an angel! . I'm excited. But at the same time, I notice the concern, bordering on fear, in her eyes as she looks at me. She wants me to talk. She asks me questions, asks me to lift my arms and legs. The nurses with her are also completely attentive. My doctor finally admitted me to the neurology ward. They hung a needle in my arm and a serum bottle over my bed. The next day, as soon as the shift started, they started to take blood from my arm for a continuous blood test. The nurse came to take blood for the second time because it was black and thick. Later, two adult nurses who were not from this ward, and for some

reason I suspected they were nurses, also said that it was related to the epidemic while taking blood. On the morning of that eventful first day, another beautiful young woman came to visit me, but she just looked at me and then left without saying anything. Have I seen her before? I couldn't place her at first. But I soon remembered that I had been a patient of that beautiful lady at the same hospital a year ago.

We were in the middle of an epidemic disaster that had an important place in world history, with more than a million deaths recorded globally, including many doctors and nurses. That weekend, we got together with friends for a picnic at a nearby lake. The municipality's roadside facilities overlooking the lake were excellent, with indoor and outdoor area. A large parking area, terraced pergolas with a view in front and backing onto the woodland, a small playground and an artificial lake connected to the lake by a canal under the road - an impressive sight, as if the road ran through the middle of the water. We chose a pergola to our liking. Knowing that they would sit there for hours, I immediately left them and went to the lakeside on the other side of the road. The lake, which is the subject of history books, was even mentioned in books written hundreds of years ago. The settlement, located five to ten kilometers away, was the summer residence of the sultans 900 years ago. The plain on which the lake is situated was surrounded by plateaus and a mountain with ice-cold water springs at its summit. Some of the more than eighty streams flowing down from the mountain had ponds built in front of them. But the main water collection area was formed by two dams, one on the mountain and the other on the plain. The packaging and marketing of water in the country did not go back very far. While the water of this mountain also contributed to economic life, the water level

of the already shallow lake was decreasing every year and the area it covered was shrinking. The ecosystem around the lake was a habitat for various birds. In the past, the lake was said to be a source of livelihood with its reeds and fish, floating islands and peat production for potting soil. In recent years, however, it was claimed that the lake was in danger of drying up due to climate change. I'll admit it, we cheated fate that day and took a little time for ourselves. I spent the whole day lost in the moment, capturing life's precious details with my camera. The show of the birds waltzing over the lake was breathtaking. It was impossible not to see the harmony in the way they sometimes took off from where they were, glided as a flock and then landed back in the water. A few villages with white minarets complemented the view on the hills opposite, with their rich plant diversity. As I reflected on what had happened, I began to wonder about the deeper meaning behind the act of capturing beauty and bringing it to light. I confess that, partly out of fear, I give up the search for nirvana and give myself over to the pleasure of aesthetics. When I reluctantly returned to the pergola where my friends were sitting, the samovar had boiled and the meat was ready on the barbecue. We sat down at the rich table and gorged ourselves, and then started to enjoy tea. But my friends had no intention of getting up from where they were sitting and walking around. I continued my walk along the lake shore without looking back from where I had left off. As I leave that day behind, I have no hesitation in admitting that the trip would have been unforgettable even in its current state. But what I experienced just twenty-four hours later... made that day truly unforgettable.

I was lying down at home, resting, thinking of getting rid of the fatigue of that trip where I spent long

hours under the sun. The mood I was in was not a intuition. It was something different. I cannot describe it. Although I felt no physical symptoms, the thought crossed my mind that I could not speak. I couldn't believe that such a situation could be real, but it wasn't difficult to find out if it was true. If I could count aloud from one to ten, I would have shown myself that the idea was absurd. I tried to count . . no . . no sound came out of my mouth. I tried again . . tried again. Ahha! . . It's so strange! . . What an incomprehensible thing the human mind is! . Look at what was going through my mind at that moment! . . Since I can't talk, I had things to do with the computer, so let me do them. I went to the computer, opened two files side by side by splitting the screen, and was going to copy a sentence from one and paste it to the other, but in vain! . . I couldn't see half of the computer screen. Incredibly, my field of vision narrowed. First the speech, then the loss of field of vision! . . But after a short time, these disturbing symptoms disappeared on their own. And I ignored it with stupid indifference. In those days, it was time for the third vaccination. I came across news on the internet about the side effects of vaccines related to the pandemic. It was said that the symptoms I experienced were seen in people who had these vaccines. Before I got vaccinated, I went to my family doctor and told him about the incredible discomfort I was experiencing and the news about the vaccines. His eyes widened and he said seriously that these symptoms were not a side effect of the vaccines. I don't know if it was because he knew I would neglect it if he left it to me, but he immediately made an appointment for me at the neurology department of the nearby hospital. One winter day, when the roads were closed due to snowfall and I was thinking with great anxiety about how I was going to get to the hospital, believe me, hearing that

the roads had been opened to service without feeling any sense of relief revived me in a mood that suited me perfectly. Finally, I arrived at the hospital and when I took my place for examination, I saw that there were more people waiting inside to receive treatment than outside. Finally, the moment came. When I saw my name on the illuminated board indicating that it was my turn, I entered the doctor's office. I confess that I had an incomprehensible feeling that the very young and beautiful woman in front of me was not fit to be a doctor. She listened to my complaint with perfect attention and seriousness. Then she asked me to have an MRI and a CT scan. She then said that there were no findings in the films, however, due to my approaching old age, she told me that I should continue to use the blood thinner she prescribed me as a part of my life from now on. After a while, when I went for a check-up, he released me on parole. However, I can't say that I strictly followed the rules, such as taking my medication regularly. This was the doctor who came to visit me in the hospital. And I never saw him again.

My new doctor, whom I met in the middle of the night as if possessed by demons, had a different way of approaching her patients, which I noticed not immediately but later. I saw in her a caring embrace that reminded me of the affectionate, unwavering approach of a mother to her child. This seemed to me, quite obviously, unexpected. This conviction was reinforced as I heard her impressive voice coming from the adjoining rooms during her rounds every day. The needle inserted into my arm for the serum became a part of my body for ten days. A thick file was created about me. When I was wheeled from one floor to another with a nurse for an ultrasound about my heart, I finally had a convincing idea about the causes of my

illness. Cardiological neurological thing!.. No situation is as simple as it seems. The basis of my nervous system disorder is a disorder in my blood circulation system. But finding the cause of the disorder in my blood circulation system is an adventure, like a journey to the first cause in the chain of causes. And this adventure is not for doctors, but for philosophers. What I saw in the hospital was this. The doctors and nurses were doing the best they could. It is not right to blame them for not being able to prevent death. In any case, I was eventually discharged.

.....

We're getting together with friends. After a while, someone turns to me and asks.

-What happened..

-What could happen? . . There's nothing. . .

Is there really nothing? . No way, there is. There's a lot. I mutter, "My dear, it went away with yesterday, All the words belong to yesterday."

But he was insistent. "There is. There is."

Of course, there is always something. "And do you have the patience to listen?"

The other one interjected. "Just get started."

-The other day, an old video on the Ministry's website caught my attention and I watched this program twice, which unexpectedly took me back in time. It was a black and white documentary about the inauguration ceremony of a large dam about seventy years ago. It is highly probable that most of the people seen in those shots are no longer alive today. In fact, the engineer who took part in the construction of the dam and who was briefly in the frame while receiving an award in the documentary and who later became known as the 'King of Dams' passed away years ago. I guess there weren't many extraordinary events that brought so many people together

that day, leaving their work aside. That region was known throughout its history for the rains that turned into floods in the winter and spring months, but it was actually a region that promised abundance for the future. In the face of floods that occur every five or six years and cause loss of life and property every time, it can be said that the decision of the administrators to build dams was also influenced by reasons such as electricity generation and the transition to irrigated agriculture that would increase agricultural yields. Long before the start of those ceremonies in early April, people in their new clothes could be seen gathering in groups around the city. In a festive atmosphere, the arches erected in various parts of the city were decorated and everywhere was adorned with flags. Groups of men and women, young and old, on top of the cars, holding huge frames with the photographs of the statesmen, with 'welcome' signs, with the sound of drums and zurna, were enthusiastically welcoming the statesmen. Finally, the excitement among the people reached its peak when the president and prime minister, accompanied by bureaucrats, arrived at the station on a black train with white smoke billowing from its chimney. The crowd, which would not fall to the ground if you dropped a needle, was moving from side to side with an irresistible force like the waves of the sea, and it was obvious how inadequate the security forces, who were locked arms with each other, were in maintaining control. The prime minister and the president greeted the people in an open-top white Cadillac with bodyguards in front and behind them and drove to the town hall where they were to deliver a speech on the balcony. After the speeches, first by the president and then by the prime minister, in front of the huge crowd, an almost unstoppable stream of people traveled in various vehicles to the dam site, fifteen

kilometers away. Here, those who had contributed to the construction of the massive structure that would shape the fate of the region were honored and the dam, which had been holding water since winter and had turned into a long lake, was finally officially inaugurated. Would you believe me if I told you that my uncle was one of the countless people who watched the ceremonies that day. I paused the video and searched for him in the crowd for a long time, as if I could find him. I think he was around forty years old, and as a person with the past experience of the people of the region, he had relived the most painful memory of his life that day, which never left his mind. The moments of their struggle for survival almost twenty years ago, when their self-built mud-brick house in their poor neighborhood was slowly melting into water, are deeply ingrained in their memory. At the beginning of winter, after days of incessant rains, the floods completely submerged most of the residential areas and turned the city into a huge lake. The river flowing through its center rose 5.5 meters above its normal level. Households, young and old, were on their rooftops, anxiously waiting to be rescued. In a short time, some of these houses sooner or later began to fall apart, depending on the materials used in their construction. Hundreds of houses were thus destroyed and submerged in water. It was seen that the municipal teams could not reach many places, were helpless and inevitably left the disaster victims alone. The terrified screams of the people on the roofs of the houses that were scattered and mixed with the water were cut off forever as they were submerged in the water, but those moments of terror and those desperate cries were forever and indelibly engraved in the memories of those who witnessed what happened. It saddens me to think that the suffering caused by the helplessness my uncle experienced

gnawed at his soul like a harmful insect throughout his life, and that many lives have been darkened by such experiences, just as his own. In the first days of this disaster, which had never been seen before in the history of the city and which seemed to be coming due to the continuous rainfall at the beginning, lack of foresight, confusion, not knowing what to do and incompetence were dominant. The Governor's Office, the Municipality and the Red Crescent could not find the means to provide aid to the people. Work began immediately after the disaster, and thousands of citizens whose homes were submerged were relocated to mosques, inns and large buildings. Later, the waters receded naturally. The thick layer of mud and large piles of rubble that covered almost the entire city, as if reminiscent of the aftermath of the flood, were cleaned. The Red Crescent and other organizations tried to heal the wounds of the disaster. Aid such as tents, food, clothing, health supplies, coal, wood and money were provided. As a result, approximately one third of the city's population was directly affected by the disaster, many people lost their lives and countless animals perished.

When I was silent for a long time, someone asked.

-And then!?..

-My uncle was not a talkative person. When he and my father got together, they didn't talk much about their shared memories. As if a sponge had been pulled over the past, they never went beyond simple and current issues. When I compare myself to both of them, I think I have a personality that is almost the opposite of theirs. Besides, we didn't have the opportunity to come together much during our life struggles. Even after my father passed away, I didn't see the facial expression he maintained throughout his life, like the mask on the faces of ancient

Greek tragedians, change. His usual distant, serious, cold face, suggestive of worry and sadness. He visited me a few times later. Perhaps he was hoping to find his brother in me. I think he must have seen that I was nothing like my father, was disappointed, and somehow accepted it. I was full of life. I was laughing, having fun. I had a wide circle of friends. I enjoyed living. I had everything they didn't have. . In his last years, somehow, I called him on one occasion. My uncle was a long-lived man with an evil face. But when we last met, it was obvious that the old man had also collapsed physically. I don't want to think that he and my father made their lives miserable for themselves because of that bitter experience when he was in the prime of his youth, when he lost the whole family except his brother. But what can you do . . .

Suluova, 14. 10. 2024

Disappointment

After a delicious meal in a corner of the district's only exclusive restaurant, we chatted for a while with our old friend, who had retired from the teaching profession. But when the conversation turned to disappointments, it was inevitable that he monopolized the conversation. None of us could even come close to him in facing the mistakes of his youth. And in that conversation, we could not even imagine where a visit to a relative would take us. He had recently visited his elderly niece who was still alive to ask how he was doing, and they had sat together for a while, talking about old times and reminiscing about shared memories.

“There was a subject that had been on my mind. I always remembered my late uncle with an expressionless face, as if he had a mask on his face. I don't remember him ever smiling throughout his life. I asked the old woman to bring family photos. She took out a box and when the lid was opened, we were under the influence of a spell that caused the past to come alive again. The photographs were not in order, however, they went almost from the last to the first. The first things we looked at were recent photos of the family. I had the same photos taken on special occasions such as weddings and engagements. The endless stories were being told one after the other, as if reliving those days with my niece. Sometimes a photograph would first make us laugh out loud with the nostalgia it evoked, and then a sadness would descend upon us. But what really interested me were the photographs of her father. My mother's brother, whom I thought of as a dull person, had acted like a 'half father' throughout his life. We knew him from the fifty-year-old table and dining table that we

used at home. He had not finished primary school and had worked for a carpenter while he was still a child and had made these items for his sister. During the 'days of terror' when it was not safe to even stay in student dormitories, he had built a shanty-style house for me on his land far from the city as a construction foreman. Three happy years of my life had passed in this house with a sea view and no electricity. In the summer, before breakfast, I would swim in the sea, collect the rather large mussels found in the shallows of the water, clean them and cook them on a tin can over a fire.

"My uncle got married to my aunt who had run away from the lower neighborhood to him, when it was not clear how long he would stay at his sister's house after his military service. Although this situation bothered my father in those days of poverty, the bride and groom soon went to their mother and father who were struggling with life in a miserable situation in the big city. My grandfather, uncle, grandmother and aunt, in short, everyone in the expanding family was working. They lived hard years. I don't know how my grandfather started the scrap business, but it was this profession that enabled him to own a house. He was on good terms with the Romani people, who had migrated all over the world, probably seeing that universal justice did not exist in their mythical land. He piled up the scrap they collected in a fenced-off area and sent it to factories to be processed when the time came.

-Mistafendi, give me a ciara.

"My grandfather would hand the cigarette without hesitation and give his own cigarette to light. He would often light his new cigarette with his old one that was about to run out. Sometimes he would get so caught up in what he was doing that he would not notice that the burning cigarette in his mouth was about to run out, and he

would suddenly startle with fear and quickly throw the thing that burned his lip out of his mouth. Although it may not seem like anything from the outside, the profession had its own subtleties that required expertise. Bottles were placed in a separate place, broken glass was placed in separate places as colored and colorless. Metal parts such as iron, copper, and castings were classified in different places, and old ones that came in occasionally and could be sold second-hand were kept in a more protected place. When my grandfather didn't like the food at home, he would eat out. Frankly, both my grandmother, who suffered from his constant emotional abuse throughout her life, and my mother, who experienced his neglect during her childhood, disliked my grandfather. It was possible to see the contrasts in the life of that wandering man. In the dusty workplace, the broken glass, rusty iron and cans collected from the garbage dumps were neatly stacked and made ready for the factories, which was a tiring job that required being careful. On Sundays, however, my grandfather would undergo a remarkable transformation, appearing in a pressed suit, fedora, and freshly polished shoes. And that's when the drinking would start... To tell the truth, he had secured the family's future with his scrap business. He also paved the way for his son to earn a living as a driver by pulling a taxi. But my uncle did not do this job, which required strong nerves in big city traffic. He chose to continue his father's profession as the heir to the scrap dealer king with a museum-like truck from the war period.

“He had a grumpy appearance. He was ready to explode at any moment. And that was the part of him that always kept me in a state of uncertainty. He didn't make an effort to enjoy life once in a while, like my grandfather. Okay, I admit it. There were times when he would take his

family and friends on picnics in that old truck, but he didn't mix with people. He would always listen to the person he was talking to as carefully as if they were talking about important things, and would greet even the simplest topic with an expression of astonishment and surprise on his face, as if he were hearing it for the first time. He was a spectator of life. And he was alone. That was his style. He looked simple. In that simplicity, there was no flavor, taste, color to express himself. The purity reflected on his face was a mirror of his soul. He had never met evil. Obviously, he had an unshakable sense of righteousness, an unerring moral sensibility. Luckily for the man, his wife was resourceful and managed the family. She raised five children, married all but one, and saw her grandchildren blossom. Time passed and in this large family, first the grandfather and then the grandmother passed away. Towards the end of her long life, she became bedridden due to physical pain. She was of sound mind when she died.

"After losing his life partner, when we visited him, we saw that my uncle did not recognize us. He was like a child who had become inactive with his expressionless face. His past had been erased from his memory and he could not remember who came and went.

Our old friend paused here for a short while. He looked thoughtful. As if he were experiencing the confusion of an accounting in which he was lost.

"What was I looking for? . . . He said with disappointment. . . A diamond in the rough. . . A head of a family living in shallow, shallow and murky waters that have only preserved its life. . . I don't think so. It's just a photo frame. . . A faint smile on the face of someone; that unknown person that will show me that I am wrong . . .

The photographs inside the box were dwindling, and nothing was changing. A blank expression in the face

of life's harshness and cruelty... not even a forced attempt to portray a personality he didn't have, a fake role to present to the camera. They were all cold, meaningless looks that reflected him as he was. They were looking at the man with the frozen face in the photographs. This man, who never revealed his secrets, never gave himself away in any way, seemed to harbor a deeper mystery the simpler his life had been.

“For my elderly niece, that day was a day when the past was largely relived. For me, it was nothing more than an unpleasant, disappointing visit that confirmed a fixed idea. With a tired mood that made me say “I can’t look at it anymore” to the last few photos, all my expectations were gone. As I was about to give up and put back the photograph I had been holding for a while, but had not been able to examine it because of talking, somehow it caught my eye. It was a photograph of a soldier. A young man was looking at me with a happy smile on his face. Unbelievable! . . I was in complete bewilderment. The secret that I had searched and searched for all my life was right in front of me. But the damned devil inside me whispered. “Okay! . . Why was a smile forbidden on this happy face? . .” No! . . I don't want to think about it. It would be unbearable pain for me! . .

The devil passed by. For a long time, it was silent, as if there was nothing left to say. My old friend, absentmindedly flipping through the channels with the TV remote control, finally settled on an 'Expert Opinion', as if to dispel the gloom of the air he had created by changing the subject. The program was about education and a similar pessimistic picture of the never-ending future was being painted. The female speaker was talking about how, due to the incompetence of politicians and bureaucrats, the education system had completely collapsed except for the

school of public administration, which met the bureaucracy's own personnel needs.

“That reminds me of an old story,” said my old friend. The others around the table turned to him with interest. You remember, the retired teacher continued. “We had a small group and we used to go on trips together whenever we could, especially on weekends. On these short trips of a few days, we usually stayed in teachers' houses in the places we visited. After the first examples emerged, these places became widespread over time and became preferred places among teachers. However, we sometimes witnessed problems. There were times when we could not find a place to spend the night. We saw that there was no room left for teachers because of people who were not teachers. One time, I will never forget, the official who refused to let us in due to lack of space told our friend, who was engaged in a pointless argument with him, that “teachers don't take care of their homes”, which was a slap in the face.

The professional class, which has the largest segment in the country, was a group open to exploitation with its incompetent representatives. I do not know if this situation has changed today. But the more serious one was the Fund.

-Fund! . . What Fund? . .

“A building fund for primary school teachers established by law before the Great War. The fund was funded by payments deducted from the salaries of thousands of members. However, after the elections that opened the door to a reformist era, radical measures were introduced in the country with the change of government. The fund, which kept up with these, turned into a bank with thousands of shareholders. However, I should say before that the intersecting life stories of two people who

graduated from that school, which the female speaker on TV mentioned, and who met the bureaucracy's own managerial needs, seem quite interesting to me. I will now tell you the story of one of these officials, an exceptional academic. One of the rare individuals who embodies the word success. Maybe he does not go down in history, but he writes history. Speaking of history, you know, every part of the country where people live is rich in history. And naturally, it is a rich culture where human experience finds its expression in proverbs. Let me cut to the chase, we can start by saying that our hero has a strong action potential. Years after leaving the historically rich city in the countryside where he was born and raised, he wrote a book that reminds of a 'confession' about his hometown, which he opened up to the world and never returned to. While seemingly describing only a neighborhood of that historic city, he actually engages in a meaningful metaphor. Although it might appear as a defense or confession regarding the path he has chosen in life, it also reflects his attempt to justify the inevitability of his course of action, much like a proverb. I must admit that I don't think any of us around the table, including myself, understood anything from the retired teacher's last words. Despite this, everyone seemed completely focused. But as the story of success continued, the narrative changed to a simple and understandable style.

"A bright, determined, and hardworking student, he was steadily advancing towards his goal. His academic timeline reveals a clear sense of purpose. By taking additional law courses alongside his Finance major at the School of Political Sciences, he earned a law degree. Post-military service, he joined his alma mater as a teaching assistant. He completed his increasingly deepening specialization in the field of law in foreign countries.

Commercial Law, Banking Law, Civil Law... He was advancing in his career. *Actio libera in causa*.

When I said plain and simple, I was wrong. Someone was thrown out.

-What does this mean now!?

-A person knowingly or willingly puts himself in a position to do an act that will later constitute a crime.

- So, something like preparation for a crime! .

For a moment, our old friend's face showed sadness, pity, disappointment, a complex, undefinable emotion.

“It was like a theater play... skillfully... in front of everyone... He became a consultant to the bank. Somehow... He formed his team. It's a rule in these jobs. You have to cut them in. As in his academic life, with the flow of time he rose to become a board member. However, something was wrong that the bank's inspectors could not ignore. The institution's activities were not in compliance with the legislation. Risk management and security were problematic. Frankly, a wealth transfer was taking place that would result in the victimization of twenty thousand people. Inevitably, a lawsuit was filed against the Bank's management in the Commercial Court of First Instance. Five years later, the bank's inspectors won the case. But the devil's advocate, with his uncertain and sly smile on his face, was cunning. The case was immediately appealed to the Supreme Court to check the legality of the decision. Let's keep in mind that the Supreme Court's reversal decisions constitute a significant portion of the appealed decisions. However, at that time, in addition to being a professor of commercial law, he also held the positions of vice president of the international bankers' society and a member of the executive committee of the country's industrialists and businessmen's association.

He took a deep breath. He took a sip of the cold tea in front of him. Everyone was waiting impatiently to see how the story would continue.

Now it is time to talk about the second property officer. Undoubtedly, among the representatives of the nation, there were other MPs like him who had common sense and fought against injustices. It may be a strange statement, but it would be best to see him as a true hero who defended the rights of society and at the same time the reputation of the bureaucracy against unlawfulness. The truth is that in his eyes, it was not only the people who were victimized, but also the bureaucracy that was supposed to protect them. In his legendary speech in parliament, he lamented how insidiously and skillfully the ruling class had been invaded by a handful of resourceful and competent doers, and how little the institution had or could protect itself against this invasion. The bank was gradually turning into the playground of the businessmen, the corner-cutters. In his speech, he spoke of a class of corrupt, influence-peddling, profiteering and shortcutting crony capitalists that had been created and formed some 30 years earlier, during the country's transition to democracy. On the other hand, you know, it was said that the bureaucratic class that was formed 150 years ago with the Westernization movements also created its own diseases. His historical speech in the parliament reflected this as a whole. He was only listening to the voice of his conscience. Unfortunately, he was ultimately just a stubborn novel character who fought against windmills and was doomed to lose. He was rowing against the current. Because the spirit of the time showed a period when the wind stirred the sails and steered the ship in the fog to a direction where it was not visible. However, in that foggy weather, it was not enough for the professor to

be a good lawyer and academic with his brilliant mind. He was aware of this. He also had to be a member of parliament for the armor of immunity. Indeed, he paid the price and took his place in the parliamentary benches as the representative of the nation. His bank was transferred to another bank which later became the subject of suspicion and international problems. The professor was also faced by his opponent from the municipality who had taken a break from active politics for a while. Meanwhile, the story that had been told about him as a qualified fraudster in the sessions before he joined the Assembly was inevitably forgotten amidst rapidly changing agendas. But it should be kept in mind that those years were unfortunate years that were like links in a chain and were the subjects of the rich and ever-changing agenda of the country's history and naturally prepared the way for the next period.

Although it was entertaining to hear our old friend describe events in a humorous way, there were times when we could not catch the subtleties of his expression.

"In those years, it was probably not known that bankruptcy was a qualified crime, and members of the ruling party and their relatives, from the president's nephew to the prime minister's husband, were the heroes of these qualified acts, as if they wanted to show which way was right. I don't remember when the word "professor" was introduced into the jargon. It was used occasionally to describe a master of something. For example, a master mechanic would be called 'the professor of the car'. I am not sure whether the period when this respectable word gained richness of meaning by including people in the criminal world began with the professor specializing in banking who destroyed the world of thousands of people, including my relatives.

The old teacher then continued in the manner of a lecturer in a classroom. “To summarize, much later, the President's nephew was imprisoned for two years and then disappeared because of the bank he owned. His father disinherited his son before he died. Due to her husband's bank failure, for the first time in the country's political history, a circular was issued in the parliament to investigate the assets of a prime minister. He spent the last years of his life writing books on mental and physical health in his mansion overlooking the sea. His recent funeral, as is customary, was sent off to eternal rest by official dignitaries, from senior bureaucrats to the head of state. On the other hand, he was the true representative of the nation, a statesman with a property against evil, and fought throughout his life in accordance with the spirit of the law. I do not know whether that determined, resolute and combative man closed his eyes in peace before taking his last breath. The former Constitutional President and then President was content with only placing a condolence notice in the newspaper for the passing of the deputy from Mülkiye. I am not sure whether spending life pretending to be a manifestation of society's artistic pretensions or an unnamed defense mechanism, but it is a fact that advertisements target people in this way. After sending that ‘stubborn’ man off to his eternal journey, his young life partner continued his art of showing people how to ‘pretend to be’, which he never stopped doing.

“As if life had played a cruel joke, it was deeply significant that the former president, a towering figure in politics, was present at the funeral of the political science professor, who passed away only a few months later. Indeed, the former head of state, once a member of parliament for his old party, and a lifelong confidant and friend to the political science graduate, had journeyed far,

despite his age, to pay his respects. His valuable assistant, in the elegy he wrote upon his teacher's death, described him as an exemplary person, academician, administrator, politician and head of the family with his superior human qualities, intellectual knowledge, kindness, elegance, calmness and composure in the face of problems throughout his life.

I don't think anyone will remember where we came from. However, our teacher also found it necessary to explain the points to be learned from the events. "On the other hand, I think this story contains interesting clues about the nature of the individual-state relationship. The bureaucracy, with a glint in its eye, stands idly by as the devil's advocate masterfully orchestrates his infernal play, erecting a monument to his victory. Meanwhile, the victims it is sworn to protect are callously disregarded, cast aside as if they were mere nuisances. Undoubtedly, this is only the visible face of the truth. Once, while I was working at a school of theology, a conversation between a student and me had a telling effect on me, always whispering to me how naive we were, how unaware of the tricks and scraps of life. I had asked him what path he would take after finishing school. He had told me he would go into politics. When he saw that I could not find any connection with his education, he did not hesitate to make a sincere explanation.

-It was all about making money.

There was silence for a while. Our old friend had a thoughtful look. He seemed to be talking to himself.

This was a dramatic event that caused a preconception in me to collapse. In other words, in my opinion, the higher a person's diploma and position, the more moral virtue he had. My first disappointment began when I learned that ethics and knowledge were separate

fields in philosophy. Seeing that there were also very intelligent people in prisons and understanding that having common sense did not necessarily come with a high level of education made us realize a mistake. Whatever was called crime, it was not only for the ignorant. There were qualified frauds. In short, people were not moral at the same time as being knowledgeable.

Our old friend's last words were short and concise, but confusing.

-Conscience, if it still survives, is nothing but disappointment.

Suluova, 5. 11. 2024

Victim Blaming

Even though he tried to keep it quiet, the whole friend group had wind of what happened. When we finally got together, the teasing and prodding became too much, and he spilled the beans. We all listened intently as our older friend told us the mundane tale in his own words.

-The phone rang, he began his story. At that moment, I picked up the phone in my hand and saw that the caller was an unknown number. The voice on the other end first asked for confirmation whether or not I was the person he was talking to.

-Am I speaking to Mr. H. Ü.?

-I am listening, I confirmed.

-The man introduced himself. "I am F. A., the public prosecutor from A.. We are currently in the middle of an operation that we have been preparing for three months. We have determined that an officer working at the S.. bank in your district is a member of a fraud network. We have included you in this operation as a state official. However, in order to prevent our conversations from leaking out for the security of the operation, we are keeping our conversation secret from now on. You will not turn off your phone.

"Frankly, I was bored. I hadn't been able to fix the plumbing problem that I had been trying to fix since the morning. Moreover, I didn't want to waste one of the last days of my life on a crime that didn't concern me. However, based entirely on the principle of good faith, I couldn't help but doubt the truth of what was being said. However, the frequent warning messages from the police and the bank about phone fraud were still in the phone's memory.

“I told them I wanted to meet them face to face. The person on the phone who said he was a prosecutor responded that I was completely right to think so in terms of trust, but that it would have operational problems. He then gave brief and striking examples of my family ties, my past, and my areas of interest, and asked me to call 155 from the keypad without hanging up, and to verify the information about him. I knew that the phone number he gave me had been discontinued, but I did as I was asked. The voice that came to me immediately gave me the name of the prosecutor on duty, as if it knew what I was going to ask. A sense of trust was being created. In addition, the prosecutor included national and religious values in his speech. At one point, instead of the formal, distant address due to my age, he made a meaningless request such as “Can I call you brother?”

Our old friend smiled faintly. But the incomprehensible expression in his eyes was immediately replaced by bitterness.

“No matter how much I resisted, there was an effective argument in the psychological world I was drawn into. This argument was the use of detailed information in the conversations. It was as if information about the siblings and the deceased mother and father were sprinkled into the prosecutor’s speech based on some data placed in an Excel program. Moreover, the information about the surviving siblings, which was in the records of various ministries such as the Interior, Health, Trade, and which should have been confidential, as well as the information on social media, was as if it had been transferred to a file and was at his disposal, and he was using it skillfully.

‘Finally, the prosecutor concluded his remarks and handed the conversation over to the chief of police, to

whom he was in charge, for me to take the necessary instructions. Strangely enough, the tone and manner of voice of the prosecutor and then the police chief fit the prototypes you can visualise in your head. Just as when you talk to an artificial intelligence, the same mind process that leads you to the perception that you are talking to a human being was working in the same way while listening to the prosecutor and the police chief on the phone.

The voice you heard on the phone was the same as that of a real prosecutor or police chief. Instead of being sceptical, you inevitably accept the authenticity of the short, precise and commanding style. And it reminded me at that moment of a conversation I had with a police officer many years ago. When he learnt of my training, the officer had asked the following question directly. 'Is there any way of knowing whether a person is guilty or not?' The answer to this question was given many years later by the suspects in a child murder case that occupied the national agenda for quite some time.

Everyone around the table remembered that heinous incident, reminiscent of the film 'The Secret of the Town' from years ago, which insisted on remaining unsolved.

Our old friend took a short break. He took a last sip from the tea cup in front of him. He looked thoughtful. We were all eagerly waiting to see how the story would continue.

-The police chief, he continued. Finally he got to the point. He wanted me to transfer the money in my bank account to the given IBAN number via the internet branch. Whether this was their first operation, I cannot say. But the bargaining started and I offered the police chief to deposit one fifth of the account instead of the whole amount. The voice on the other side of the phone said that at that

amount, the man would not even come to the bank to withdraw it. But at my insistence he exploded and began to speak angrily and threateningly. Suddenly he turned into a 'bad cop'. At one point he talked about sending officers to pick me up. But when there was no response from me, he asked me with curiosity and suspicion if I was there. I could hear a voice, but it was the voice of a moaning person. 'My medicines, my medicines,' he said in a low voice, breathing with difficulty.

Everyone was absorbed in the flow of the story, not thinking whether the crisis our old friend had suffered was real or not. He, on the other hand, continued his speech with an indescribable pleasure from our intense interest.

'I don't know whether the person on the other end of the phone was alarmed or not, but he immediately started giving me advice. On the one hand he was telling me to drink water, on the other he was trying to make excuses for the threat. He told me that they hadn't slept for three months because of this operation, and he wanted me to agree with them.

'What I feared was happening to me,' muttered our old friend, with a countenance that I could not decide whether thoughtful or sad.

-What was it!?... I asked.

But he ignored my question.

'After long efforts, due to the precautions taken by the bank, the online transfer could not take place. This time the chief of police asked me to make the transaction at the bank before the end of working hours. However, I had to hurry. I told him that the branch was 20 minutes away, but added that I could make it by bicycle. The phone would be switched on in any case and I set off immediately.

The excitement in the audience was at its final stage. Breaths were held.

‘Halfway through, I switched off the phone, which I was asked to keep switched on at all times. A message from my nephew, who had been trying to reach me for some time, caught my eye. ‘Uncle. You are being swindled right now.’ Surprised, I thought, how could he be aware of this? But I immediately remembered that the fraudsters had given detailed information about my brothers to build trust. ‘Like a police operation, a fraudster operation...’ I wonder how long it took them to prepare for this . .

‘At the same time, the phone rang. It was a different number from the city centre. A police officer from the provincial police, a friend of my nephew, confirmed the information in the message. He advised me to freeze my bank account immediately. I told him that I would go to the Police Headquarters. It was late in the working hours and the phone, which I did not answer because the operation was not yet over, kept ringing.

‘It was easy to enter the building of the Police Headquarters, where there was an armed guard at the door, but I was having trouble finding the person I was going to apply to. After wandering around the corridors for a while without seeing anyone around, I knocked on the door and entered a room where an officer taking a statement asked me what I wanted. ‘I am being defrauded right now’, I said in a low voice. Although the officer told me where to go, I continued to wander back and forth in the building where I could not see anyone in the corridors. Obviously, the Police had secured itself against the dangers of the outside world. At that moment, I remember listening to a radio theatre that described the psychological state I was in. It was a play about a person who gets lost in the corridors of a building and cannot find his way. Finally, I

reached the fraud office with the guidance of an officer I met completely by coincidence and by opening the closed and encrypted corridor doors. The officer in charge here told me that the first thing to do was to freeze the account in the bank, and when I could not do this over the phone, he sent me to the bank with a police officer in official clothes. After the necessary procedures were carried out to freeze the account, we returned to the police station to make a statement.

‘When I explained what had happened and said that the time spent with the fraudsters was about three hours, the officer was surprised. He said that usually this interview was completed within an hour. Afterwards, I remembered that I had left out some details when I gave my statement to him. This was not important to the police, I think they were more interested in the material clues than in my thoughts, as they were the experts. In my mind, a vague proof of the authenticity of the operation against me was that the operations chief on the phone told me that he would send a team of gendarmes or police officers to the house to make it convincing, but that I was not to contact them in any way. This had happened. The first thing that came to my mind was that there might be someone or some people in the police or gendarmerie who knowingly or unknowingly helped the fraudsters. The phone numbers of the fraudsters who called me and the IBAN numbers they asked me to deposit the money were not enough to catch the perpetrators. Before asking me whether I would lodge a complaint, the officer who took my statement convincingly explained that although the organisation has a cyber security department, investigating such cases is often fruitless. During our short conversation, the police officer mentioned the high rate of youth crime. When I asked him whether he was hopeful about young people,

his face briefly showed a vague expression of emotion. But he did not express his personal opinion. His response was within the boundaries of what was expected of him as an organisation.

Everyone around the table took a deep breath. But the story was not over. When our old friend telephoned his siblings after the incident, he learnt that all of them had been hit at the same time. His sister, who was 800 km. away, was the first to realise that this was a fraud attempt; she immediately understood that the callers were fraudsters and hung up the phone to avoid answering. They took his older brother, who was also 750 kilometres away, out of the house and directed him to the district police station, and when he entered the police station and made a report, the contact was broken. The younger brother's son immediately realised that the phone call was about fraud and called his uncle, who was a thousand kilometres away, several times to warn him. Our old friend paused for a moment and felt the need to provide additional information.

‘Actually, such activities are not limited to this. What is more thought-provoking . . is the use of artificial intelligence in fraudulent activities. You know, the algorithms in a number of programs, which are available for pennies on the dollar and are therefore illegal, present a personalised file based on the unique interests and interaction history of each Internet user. This means that these programmes not only detect what we have done in the past, but also predict what we will do in the future. When asked what should be done against these fraudsters, artificial intelligence, like the police and banks, emphasises ‘the attention of the interlocutor’. That is, the target person, the victim. . . Don't say, ‘They can't fool me’, they make you listen to a speech of a voice you

recognise or watch a video of a relative of yours with the help of artificial intelligence, and all your thoughts change in the desired direction.

Our old friend was rich in knowledge and had a lot to say on this subject. Of course, we could not have known that his interest in the subject dated back to the past.

‘The experience of the thief I caught on a bus when I was a young man was one of mixed emotions. It was upsetting for me that he was subjected to humiliating behaviour by the guards. The offender should have been dealt with by the law, not by unwritten rules. At one point, an official who saw me thinking said the following. ‘It is their profession, they do not change. Only as long as they are away from society, people are safe.’

‘This subject of fraud has indirectly interested me for a long time’, said our old friend. It formed a subsection of my thesis on ‘Human behaviour under difficult conditions’. While I was telling you what I had been through, I touched upon a point that I had touched upon once in a while, and that is that the trick is to manage your perceptions. For a while, this became a much talked about topic in politics. Perception management. That is, the common point between a politician and a fraudster is to make you see the issue from a certain angle. To draw your attention to a point, to make you concentrate there . . . to draw your mind into a circle. . . In layman's terms, ‘Look the other way!’. In the years after World War II, the months-long extensive indoctrination techniques applied by the Chinese in the Far East to prisoners of war, as well as to missionaries, scientists and doctors living in their country, can also be considered within this framework. The earlier one is a radio theatre performed by Orson Welles in ‘38. This is the real classic. When the Chinese brainwashed people in prison, their aim was to turn them

into adherents of an ideology. The victim was under very difficult conditions. However, the event that took place in the USA about ten years before the Chinese practice had an impact on the perceptions of countless people in a very short period of time, perhaps an hour. With the widespread panic it caused, a radio drama went down in the history of science. Moreover, Welles' theatre example is more similar to the telephone scams we experience. You do not physically deal with the perpetrator. Undoubtedly, there are famous examples of frauds in our country, such as the sale of squares, bridges, clock towers, etc., in which the perpetrator is physically involved. However, with the introduction of mobile phones, fraud has also come of age. The victims of the first person who skilfully used this technique were the leading names of the country.

When our old friend began his introduction to his hero, he began by saying that he had no direct relationship with him in real life. Many years ago, he had watched him in court and a few times when he gave interviews to journalists. Once they had locked eyes. He described that moment in these words. 'He was an actor and I was a spectator. Maybe it would be better to say observer. He was intelligent, he had initiative. And he was not 'naive'.

We knew that this word was used sarcastically. He had used it of a famous swindler as 'gullible woman' in the sense of 'ready to be deceived'. However, when our old friend characterised the swindler with his own words, I think he meant a negative meaning. As the old saying goes, he had 'no light in his eyes'.

'Choosing the prime minister of the country as a victim was the end of his life of fraud. Posing as a retired general, he called the prime minister from the prime minister's phone and asked for money, stating that retired and active soldiers wanted to work for his party in the

upcoming elections. The Prime Minister responded positively to this offer and paid him a large sum of money from the secret fund, exceeding his expectations.

‘However, the news that he was arrested in a holiday resort after the woman he was with betrayed him in a shady operation involving a large number of police officers and a thorough search of the houses was reported on the front page of the newspapers.

‘After his arrest, it is not known how true it is, he said that the then Minister of Justice had offered him 4 million marks on condition that he would not tell the case in court. However, when he admitted that he had received this money from the Prime Ministry, the Prime Minister was criticised for using the secret fund for political gain and the way to the Supreme Court was set for the Supreme Court. Although the Prime Minister appealed to the Court of Cassation to overturn the verdict and have his name removed from the documents, the Court of Cassation upheld the verdict against the swindler.

However, he was found guilty by the Parliamentary Investigation Commission on the grounds that he had ‘irregularly spent money from the secret fund’. However, the prime minister was acquitted as the parliamentary plenary session failed to reach a majority of votes. In his defence during the trial, the prime minister stated that it was forbidden by law to disclose the expenditures of the slush fund.

‘Our swindler, heroised by the newspapers, was making numerous delusions, such as that he had been targeted by the youth branches of a political party, that the same party would attempt to eliminate him through mafia connections, that there were extra-legal structures within the state.

This seemed to me to be a dangerous characterisation. How could a swindler be turned into a hero?

‘I followed the hearings from a corner on one occasion. He turned the court into a theatre, he used his acting skills to the fullest. With his harsh behaviour towards the press and the judges, he was on the agenda of the country and kept it alive. Every word he said made headlines in the newspapers. He believed that only in this way could he guarantee his life.

‘Looking at the photograph as a whole, it is said that those years were the lost years of the country. People were uncomfortable with the illegal activities centred around the relationship between politicians - the Underworld - Public Institutions and personal interests, which were largely aimed at obtaining money, benefits and power, and with the fact that these activities were presented as ‘the fight against terrorism and the interests of the country’ and hidden behind this veil. It was a time when prisoners ruled the roost in prisons, and in a murder by members of a notorious gang who smuggled in a gun, he was shot in the head while the prisoner next to him was killed. His cellmate was a member of a terrorist organisation and had surrendered in remorse. In his confessions, this prisoner had stated that the seemingly opposing organisations that threatened the security of the country were directed from the same centre. The king of the swindlers was probably left presumed dead. From then on, he repeatedly claimed that it was really him. He said that the bullet, which could not be removed by surgery, was a gift from the state. Finally, he was among those released from prison with a general amnesty. A few years later, he died in a hospital due to an incurable illness caused by the bullet in his head. No one came to collect

his body. He took his place among the barons of the criminal world as one who 'lived fast and died young'. His children did not inherit a fortune, but a troubled life.

There was silence for a while. I don't think any of us remembered the details of these events, which were left in the darkness of the past due to rapidly changing agenda topics, because of our 'fish memory'. Our old friend was talking about the quirks of life.

'His father was also a swindler. During his lifetime, he had access to the only prime minister in the country's history to be executed, reportedly did his private business outside the law and wrote a book about him. Years later, he advised his son to 'play big'. And he kept his father's word. He lined up the prominent political and economic figures of the country, men and women alike. And he immediately spent the money he received on gambling with the title of 'gambler', the second after 'swindler'.

'His son, when talking about him, said that he had about 150 cases. His father was a folk hero, a Robin Hood, who took from the rich and gave to the poor. He was obviously proud of him. And his daughter . . . A few years later his brother, wanted for a different fraud, was caught by the police. The family, which close relatives had avoided as much as possible, was broken up.

Our old friend admitted that he had difficulty in drawing a portrait of the criminal.

'The mentality of self-righteousness is probably common to all con artists, as it is to everyone. Each of them lacks the empathy required to put himself in the victim's shoes. The victims are people who deserve to be defrauded, as if they deserve to be defrauded because of their gullibility, as evidenced by the fact that he does not hesitate to express his opinion with the word 'gullible woman'. One famous swindler says that he does not go to

the victims, they come to him on their own. As it finds expression in the mentality of the people in the form of 'If he can do it, let it be halal', all the blame lies with the victim himself. But let us come to Nasreddin Hodja . . as he says in his joke, 'the thief is not to blame at all'.

'Unfortunately, this was not a story of guidance. Every time I thought I saw traces of transformation in him, I was disappointed. He was a genius who managed to attract people's attention with a lack of empathy and a lack of conscientious feeling that made one worry about the existence of psychopathy. He was a perfect but negative role model for today's generations who grow up with an insatiable need for attention.'

'Judging by what happened, compared to other fraudsters, the amount he took was not so important. What made him dangerous was that his victims were people at the top of power. Not only did he discredit the bureaucracy, but he had the audacity to challenge the system. This reminded me of an old incident. A famous governor, talking to a terrorist who had been captured and then executed for terrorism, asked him, 'Why did you do this? The government you opposed has changed.' After his retirement, he recounted this memory on a TV programme and said that the terrorist replied: 'Our case is not with the government, but with the system.'" I don't think our fraudster consciously opposed the system like that terrorist, but that's what he did.

A Brother and A Sister

That weekend for a picnic, after carefully placing all the materials, especially the barbecue and samovar, in the trunk, we piled into the car and drove 10 kilometres to the 'visit'. As the name suggests, it was a wooded area surrounded by a low wall with the grave of a saint and two small rooms for worship. There was water, toilets and a couple of swings for the children, but the municipality took care of the place once in a while when they thought of it, and it had a religious identity. Although it is located within the borders of the village, which is five kilometres away, when we went there, we found the whole place covered with weeds and in need of maintenance. In this natural state, it was actually a place where we would rest our heads. After a while, the food was eaten and then it was time for tea. Someone asked our retired lecturer for something to talk about.

-You've done research for this place too, haven't you, teacher?...

Our old friend responded without hesitation.

-Yes, when I came to the district 25 years ago, this was one of the first places I visited in the neighbourhood. It has not changed much in the intervening time. I think that for a while, as part of the government's policies to integrate the people, interest was shown in such places and incentives were given for their revitalisation. Perhaps they wanted different faith groups to be more tolerant of each other around these tombs.

'Alevi and Sunni?', the questioner asked, as if digging into the subject.

-Of course, said our old friend. The fact that Alevis have been victimised for centuries cannot be ignored. The

person who is buried here is also regarded as one of the religious saints whom Alevis regard as a leader and attribute myths to him. In this respect, I believe that they have always been successful in protecting their values. Are the Sunni rulers who inscribed on the tombstone of this man that he was a Halveti sheikh from Khorasan, so ignorant that they do not know in which century Halvatism came to Anatolia . . how can the person who was both a Halveti sheikh and a Khorasan Ereni be a person of different centuries?

-Where is this discussion going?..

-Alevis are not Halveti, neither are Sunnis. . But the person buried here is not a Khorasan Ereni, as they write on the tombstone, but a Halveti sheikh. It is also reported that his daughter had made a foundation for the village. He did not come from Khorasan as they say, but from the neighbouring district 25 km away. Although his father was a mudarris there, he chose Halvatism, which was the widespread sect of the period he lived in. In fact, the provincial centre of the district was one of the centres of the same order throughout the country. Moreover, the central tekke of this order in the city is one of the rare structures that have survived from centuries ago.

Our old friend took the subject from sects and lodges to settlements.

‘In your work, sometimes not very clear data can lead you to artistic explanations of the world you visualise in your imagination. It is as if there is a rivalry between the sheikh's hometown and the city to which he belongs. You can liken it to a younger sister's jealousy of her older sister's beauty. The city is actually incomparably beautiful in the true sense of the word. It is fairytale-like. It is mesmerising. It is not known whether the purpose of the geography in which it is located is to protect this

indescribable beauty from the evil eye or to imprison it as if afraid of letting it slip away, but it has tightly embraced its living space with an incomprehensible thought. In a narrow valley divided into two by a river, on the banks of which are lined with mansions, water closets, bridges connecting the two shores, but which occasionally causes disasters with its floods, what makes the place perfect is everything that those who have lived there have added to this geography. This is what makes this place fairy-tale-like and fascinating. For centuries, the owners of this place have adorned their homeland with mosques, madrasas, inns, inns, bridges, tombs and many other monumental monuments, like pearls strung on a necklace. The story of each of them is endless. Travellers who have come from distant lands and inhaled the air here have engraved this exotic land with thousands of years of history in their memories.

You can imagine that our old friend was in a state of mind as if he was speaking from another world when he was telling these things in an artistic, descriptive, imaginative and historical style. After a short breathing break, he continued his words where he had left off.

‘Let’s talk about the little brother. . . Although the settlement at the foot of the mountain, named after the famous nobles of the district with its rich forests, has the rich heritage of our ancestors, it does not have the fantastic visuality of the city it is connected to. The famous names of our history have left architectural monuments that have become deeds, while the traditions and customs that prevail in every aspect of daily life have shaped the identity of the district. The religious and cultural richness of the city is also present here. It is a geography where every sect that people choose according to their hearts

finds life. The richness that offers so many right paths inevitably reminds the existence of the devil.

‘I will never forget the words of a student I met one day. He had used the word ‘palace intrigues’, which he had used because of the difficulties he had faced while trying to open a business in the city, as a quality attributed to the people of the region. Let us remember that the geographical location of the city has given it strategic importance throughout history, and for a long time it had an identity with its palace where the sultans were prepared to rule from their childhood. In the Sharia registers, in the student revolts of hundreds of years ago, the ruler's letter to the capital mentioned that the people protected and defended these rebels. It had also been the centre of popular movements a few centuries before. To give an idea about the people, a few examples are the lynching of an Italian doctor in the middle of the previous century, who had taken refuge in a church for protection because ‘my namehrem looked at the naked body of the dead’. Another significant incident is the case of the sheikh of the Naqshbandi order who was reported to the sultan and exiled to a distant land. The conspiracy against the son of another Naqshbandi sheikh, of whom this sheikh was a disciple, is very interesting. A prostitute who came to the office where he worked, caused a scandal whose consequences were foreseeable by shouting loudly in front of everyone that the money he had given her for the affair was a heart. Ironically, this young man, 20 years later, when he was a grand vizier, built a shrine and a mosque for his father on a high place overlooking the city, which is still visited today. Another incident is when the people, who were enraged by a young man who was attacked, attacked a village near the city and set it on fire, destroying everything.

Although I am from here, I confess that I had not heard any of what he said. It was obvious that the others were no different from me.

“One of the founders of the district, as well as the city center, is another of the leading grand viziers of the state. The spirit of the past has deeply penetrated the city and the district, and they have shared a closeness that they could call ‘sisters’. However, this beauty, with its vague disturbing quality that you cannot fully define, has a selfish quality that seems to keep you out. On the other hand, I have always wondered. Do the people of places with such a rich heritage squander the wealth that has created their ancestors and themselves for generations? Or are they crushed under a weight they cannot bear.

There was a short silence. None of us could have guessed where the conversation would lead. Inexplicably, our old friend suddenly took the subject to private.

“A few years ago, my sister came to visit her sick husband and her sister-in-law. When I went to visit them in the district, I immediately realized that I had not had enough information about her husband’s illness. He had contracted a very rare disease that could not be cured and could happen to anyone at any age, and the disease had reached its final stages. He could not speak, could not walk on his own, could not clean the toilet. He tried to participate in conversations with a scrawl that was difficult to read. His mind was completely in his right place, his brain was working flawlessly. As they say, hey big guy! . . . Were you someone who would fall into such a state . . .

And then we realized that we had started to wander among the pages of a life story that stretched deep into the past.

“Almost 50 years ago, when he became our brother-in-law, he was remembered in our minds as a

black-haired, medium-height, well-dressed, handsome and talkative man. He could do anything, he was skilled. He was a life-loving man, he would get along with people right away, he had a strong sense of morality and justice, he would intervene in situations he saw as unjust. We learned over time that he and his older sister and younger sister had spent their childhood in complete poverty. Their father had divorced their mother and married another woman. They grew up in a one-room house with a toilet in the garden. The older sister and the younger sister studied and became teachers. He started working after high school without completing college. He married my sister around this time. They had a child. The older one did not marry. His younger sister married a teacher where he worked, had two children, one a girl, and settled in her husband's hometown. Although they were a thousand kilometers apart, they visited their sister every year. There is no doubt that their family ties were strong. The single sister lived with her mother in the place where she was born and raised, and with her savings, she bought a plot of land and built a house on it. A detached house with a garden, which is almost everyone's dream. Her mother spent the last years of her life in this house that her eldest daughter had built with great effort. I can't imagine how much pain the sister, who always had a serious appearance, must have gone through when she lost her mother. As we gain life experience, we gradually move away from our dreams. She suggested that the siblings build a floor on top of the house, thinking, "Maybe one day we will come together again." Only my brother-in-law was positive about this.

There was a short silence. I thought that most of us experience those nostalgic feelings that deeply feel the longing for the warmth of family. Our old friend continued his analysis of his heroes.

“I had visited that woman several times because she was in the neighboring district, and I had taken her on trips to the house by car several times. I had taken photos of the siblings together and placed them somewhere in the album. She was trying to hide her fragile and emotional world behind her hard shell. I don’t know to what extent she was successful in this. Her seriousness and know-it-all face stood out due to her profession. But when they got together with her brother, they would first act childish and fuss for a while, then they would immediately clash on a subject to the point of fighting. Neither of them would accept the other’s opinion. However, the little sister would stay away from these fights. The love of the older brother and sister for her was the only indisputable common ground that did not turn into a fight.

That smart little girl, the hero of fairy tales?! . She looked quite romantic . . .

“When the little girl’s husband, who was a teacher, won the mayoral elections with his candidacy from the leading party of the time, it can be said that they moved up a class in their lives. It is not known how successful the man was in his actions, however, he was re-elected in the following term through his party. However, he did not get a third term, because he passed away at a relatively early age due to a heart attack. It cannot be said that the education of both children within the family was successful. Undoubtedly, the lack of interest of their mother and father reflected the boundlessness they experienced during adolescence in the formation of their characters. After the death of his father, the male made wrong investments while starting out in life. He got into debt that he could not handle. The foreclosure officers came knocking on the door. They had to take out a

significant portion of their wealth. Their mother left home during this difficult period and went to her sister. I saw her there. She was not in a good condition at all. One of the most difficult moments in the sister's life was witnessing her brother's departure. The words "sister, I am dying" came from the lips of that little sister who still clearly bore the traces of her beauty. I cannot even imagine how painful this must have been after her mother. I do not think she could forget this pain in time, but her life was now passing within the order she had managed to establish, as she occasionally confessed as if she was afraid of losing it.

Our old friend had visited that woman when she was approaching her seventies. But there was at least some harmony in the monotony of the woman's simple surroundings and the monotony of her monotonous life. That was enough for him.

"When her brother came to her years later with an incurable disease, she undoubtedly thought that she would not be able to endure the unbearable pain of witnessing the deaths of her mother and sister, and she wished that God would not show her that day. This wish came true.

"Events developed rapidly. As my brother-in-law's illness progressed, he was taken to the emergency room and taken to intensive care, when his sister also developed an illness. She was in unbearable pain. The doctors at the State Hospital who examined her were not willing to perform surgery, which they saw as life-threatening due to her advanced age. The child of her deceased younger sister came like Hızır and took her to the private hospital in her hometown. While my brother-in-law was in intensive care, her sister passed away in that private hospital a thousand kilometers away. His body was brought by plane. In the same hospital, his brother was in intensive care and his sister was in the hospital. The funeral prayer was held the

next day and he was buried next to his mother in the district cemetery in the grave he had bought for himself and his brother. There was no hope for my brother-in-law. He was transferred from intensive care to the Palliative Ward. This was the ward where patients spent their last days with their relatives. My brother-in-law's throat and stomach were punctured, he was connected to a machine and a catheter was inserted. Oxygen was sent to his lungs through a plastic tube and liquid food called formula was sent to his stomach through another tube.

The story had turned into a complete tragedy. I cannot imagine the psychological atmosphere in which the listeners were. Our old friend was gradually approaching a result we did not want to predict.

"The disease had reached its final stage in a short period of a month or two. The death of the sister was kept a secret from my brother-in-law so that he would not be sad. After her funeral, the two siblings stayed at home for about ten days. While my sister and I were at the hospital as relatives of the patient, the house was searched down to the smallest needle, with such meticulousness that it would be reminiscent of a police search. Since the deceased sister had tried to keep her wealth in her house instead of in the bank, there was no inheritance left to share with the other heirs. However, in an inexplicable way, before the old woman went to her nephews for treatment, she had given them a lesson that they should pay attention to. She had brought her old shoes from the shoe rack and examined the gold inside.

"When the nieces were leaving to come back later, they had stopped by the hospital and had slipped in a note that they had taken four or five pieces of meat from the refrigerator. When they had asked me before how my brother-in-law was, I had simply said, 'He can't speak or

move.' 'He is aware of everything he sees.' They wanted to say goodbye to him too. The girl kissed his hands with a respectful and loving look and began to tell an emotional story about one of the memories that had taken their place in her mind. This memory was a typical memory reflecting the patient's sarcastic nature. With this aspect that reflected his personality throughout his life, he would always find someone to joke around with and entertain people. His brother watched my brother-in-law with dull eyes for a while and then said, "Let's go now." For some unknown reason, at that moment, "Once upon a time in the west" came to my mind. Why did I remember the "bad guy who gives up on killing the crippled man after watching him crawling on the ground in despair for a while" in this Western classic...

"But I soon figured out the problem. The only thing my brother-in-law and his sister never discussed was their sister. The reason she left her own home to live with her sister and passed away there was because of her children's irresponsible behavior. My brother-in-law had become obsessed with this issue and saw his nephews as 'their mother's murderers'. However, he had no choice but to keep them out of his life. If he had known about his sister's death, he would have thought that he would be next.

"A period began when my sister learned how to care for her patient from the nurses. During her hospital days, the nurses were drawn to the fact that she changed the sheets every day and ran back and forth in the hospital corridors to do this. Despite this, they probably thought that this weak and frail woman could not care for the patient at home. On the other hand, the necessary devices for home care were purchased. I don't know if that's why they called this disease 'the rich man's disease'. There

were special nurses trained for this job, and their salaries exceeded the salaries of doctors. Finally, on a snowy winter day, my brother-in-law was brought home by the hospital vehicle. They tried not to let his brother's absence be felt. They all said in unison that he was with his nephews. However, when I returned home to stay the night a short while ago, I would be greeted by the joyful and lively voices of the nephews at the house of the dead. They would come back after a while due to religious rituals.

“During the condolence visits, we had gone upstairs with the nephew to the tenant's house. He monopolized the conversation with his social personality and started talking about his past memories. This memory, which gave clues about his personality from his military life that left an unforgettable mark on the men's lives, was thought-provoking. He was talking about two young people. “They had gone on a vacation by car. They had invited the young girl they had met and immediately became friends with to where they were staying. They took the girl to the house where they were staying with images that gave the illusion that she was being kidnapped when viewed from the outside. The girl had sex with both of them one after another. Then she found a way to get out of the house and went straight to the police station. She filed a complaint that she had been raped. She was sent to the hospital. After the examination, it was understood that what she had said was true. Although the arrested young men said that the girl had consented, the victim's complaint was taken as the basis. The judge on duty had difficulty making a decision. The girl did not seem convincing, her actions did not inspire confidence. Moreover, her request was interesting. She was willing to marry whichever one. However, all the evidence was

against the young men. Their guardians were called. They would try to meet the girl's excessive demands, such as wanting a wedding with drums and zurna. The situation of the two professors' children would damage their professional reputations. She was willing to leave with alimony after the marriage.

“As he told the story, he added dramatic elements. If the children went to prison, they would be sent to a ward for those who committed sexual crimes. In the end, the girl's wishes came true with a wedding with drums and pipes.

“Then what crossed my mind was this. Who does he identify himself with in this incident he is telling?!.. The father of the young people, the young people, or?..

“A short while later, official letters were sent to the addresses of the heirs. This document was a certificate of inheritance. It was a document showing who the legal heirs were and their legal shares of the inheritance. Accordingly, the sister had determined her heirs with a will approved by a notary public years before her death. These people consisted only of a younger sister and brother. The father's children from the other wife were disinherited. Although their shares of the inheritance were smaller, this situation was upsetting for them because they had been in constant contact for years. They didn't want to believe how the deceased sister could do such a thing. But they knew each other. They knew for sure that the little sister who had passed away years ago was behind all this. In their phone conversations, the older one of these sisters would warn my sister, telling her to be careful with the little sister's children, that they were no different than hungry wolves. This woman was also a retired teacher. She had started calling more after my brother-in-law's illness. Sometimes I would overhear their phone

conversations that would last for hours. We met at the funeral. I couldn't figure out if her know-it-all nature came from her family or if it was due to her profession. Of course, in our time, everyone knew everything... but this was more evident in the family. I can't forget a remarkable offer that the woman made during her phone consultations for a patient she couldn't see. She was telling my sister to squeeze a few pennies into her palms so that the nurses at the hospital could take better care of her. The story of my desperate sister who applied this idea, which I find completely unbecoming of a retired teacher, during that stressful period, became tragicomic. The nurse who was really doing her job, vehemently rejected the money she told her to buy a gift for her son, as if she had been insulted. The cleaning lady who mopped the floors accepted it gratefully and later asked my sister to help someone else in need. While walking around the hospital corridors in a depressed state, this time he saw a foreign family who did not speak Turkish. He felt sorry for their situation and wanted to approach them and offer some help. This time, the woman's husband strongly opposed this kind-hearted offer of help. Frankly, the offer of the retired teacher who was a know-it-all could not be realized. Later, I also sensed that the woman's son had the trait of making quick decisions on a subject with little knowledge.

“The middle one was also an interesting person. She had also retired from this family of teachers. I don't remember why she got divorced, but I think she was an initiative woman. She gave paid lessons. She was not only thrifty, but also knew how to preserve the value of her money. She would take on jobs that others would find risky and would not attempt. She had bought and sold several houses. She had a summer house in a famous

coastal town. But what made this woman unforgettable to me was her naughty son. This hooligan, who was addicted to drugs, was pressuring her to turn her mother's house into his own name, and was threatening her in a frightening way. The woman eventually disappeared in a way that would make her disappear.

"However, the third child of this family was a cancer patient. He would travel back and forth from his hometown to the big city on a three-hour train ride to receive treatment. I remember seeing him more often. He had cut his hair really short and was starting to gain weight. He was trying to hold on to life. I was surprised when he used the word 'snob', which is used in many meanings such as stupid, sluggish, slovenly, unpleasant, tedious, shameless, for his husband in an environment where acquaintances gathered and men were being criticized for their rudeness, selfishness and ingratitude. Frankly, he was the one who visited the deceased the most. The insignificant piece he took from her as a keepsake probably reflected his disappointment.

There was silence for a while. A complete deathly silence. . .

"When my brother-in-law passed away, my sister was alone. For a while she didn't understand that his eyes, which were fixed on a fixed point, were no longer those of a living person because the machines were working. When she finally realized that this immobility was eternal, she called the hospital. The ambulance arrived. There was nothing more to be done for him. The machines had been turned off, a blanket had been pulled over the dead body.

"Later, when the people in the gashlhane saw the wounds on his back that had not healed during his washing, they could not control their gazes. But what really made me think was that his eyes were open. Gassal

tried to close them two or three times. Finally, when he could not succeed, he gave up. The funeral prayer was performed and he was buried next to his sister in the family cemetery.

Suluova, 23. 12. 2024